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Illinois Wesleyan Students Receive Scholarships to Study Abroad in Asia

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Two Illinois Wesleyan students, Andy Sur, Bloomington, Ill., and Annie Mikal, Antioch, Ill., were awarded scholarships of \$5,000 each to study abroad in Asia during the spring semester of 2002.

Sur was awarded the Students for International Training (SIT) Freeman Grant to study abroad in China, and Mikal received the Freeman Asia Award from the Institute of International Education (IIE) to study abroad in Mongolia. The scholarships were funded by the Freeman Foundation, established in 1992 by businessman Houghton Freeman, who spent his early years in China. The foundation donates \$30 million dollars annually to various organizations, programs and scholarships that foster greater Asian-American appreciation and understanding.

Sur and Mikal will both use their scholarships toward the SIT study abroad programs in Asia. SIT strives to promote intercultural understanding and cooperation between the people of the United States and other nations and offers Asian programs of study in China, India, Mongolia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Nepal and Tibet.

Field-based learning is the cornerstone of every SIT study abroad program and students integrate academic study with field experience. From their classes and experiences students also gain greater language proficiency and further understanding of the host culture, advanced knowledge of a particular subject, greater awareness of global issues and increased appreciation of other cultures.

Sur, a junior international studies and political science major at Illinois Wesleyan, will be enrolled in the language and cultures program in the Yunnan Province of China. The program base is in the city of Kunming, where Sur will spend 90 classroom hours in an intensive language-study course learning Mandarin. In addition, he will study Chinese social issues, history and religions in a life and culture seminar.

Sur also will participate in field excursions to the ancient capitals of Dali and Lijiang to experience traditional Bai and Naxi cultures and develop an understanding of China's ethnic and cultural diversity. During his final weeks in China, Sur will pursue an independent study project that involves field research and the culmination of his work in a 20-40 page paper and an oral presentation to his colleagues and academic director.

Sur who recently finished studying abroad at Bond University in Robina, Australia, is a member of the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, a national scholastic honor society for freshman men, with a 3.7 cumulative GPA, and is a two-year letterman for the IWU swim team.

Mikal, a junior sociology major at Illinois Wesleyan, will be enrolled in the culture and development program in Mongolia. While taking Mongolian language classes, Mikal also will attend culture and development seminars on diverse topics such as Mongolian art, environment,

archaeology, history and economics. Another important component of Mikal's program involves travel and the study of indigenous cultural values, visiting the Gobi desert and later spending a week in nomadic camps.

During the last four weeks of her program, Mikal will be involved in field research and conduct independent study in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia.

"I hope to get a better perspective on other amazing cultures, where I currently live, and on myself," said Mikal. "There's so much I want to learn about Mongolia and I feel this program will help me expand my horizons and will be a good growing experience for me."

Mikal is involved in the IWU chapter of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, an international evangelical campus mission serving more than 35,000 students and faculty on more than 560 college and university campuses nationwide.